

## Ranch Movie Making Difficult When Cowboy Get Temperamental

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MERTZON — As some readers with sharp memories may recall, several months ago I announced plans to make a movie of life in the short grass country. This production was to be sold to the U.S. Department of Agriculture with the result that USDA would be more sympathetic to our struggle for existence while I, thanks to the proceeds of the sale, would find the struggle much less arduous.

Sad to say, the project has met with a series of delays and disappointments.

Of course a side advantage of being a short grass rancher is that it prepares the mind to expect delays and disappointment; if there is ever any demand for some expert delay-and-disappointment talent, this area can stock practically any size operation imaginable.

I thought movie making would be different from the ranching game and that this film alone would lead me to fame and fortune. But it has not.

The primary mistake was depending on the boys at the ranch to be the actors. I find there is not one in the bunch who is willing to start at the bottom. Everybody in the outfit wants a part so important that a successful TV puncher would fly to Europe just to discuss terms of the contract. Also, they're downright testy over the fact that the script doesn't include a part for even one female starlet.

Another stumbling block is the refusal of the men to cooperate when we need to restage some live action.

For instance, the other day my second in command went tearing across a corral full of sheep and, in the distraction of his charge, ran head on into a medium-size mesquite tree. Even though he was afoot, it was an impressive collision worthy of being recorded on film.

After we'd picked him up, brushed him off, gathered up his glasses and pronounced him sound, I casually told him that before we turned the sheep out I wanted to reenact the incident for my proposed movie.

Instead of being pleased that he'd participated in such a noteworthy event — one which might some day be flashed on the screen in full view of a group of USDA dignitaries — he surlily replied that if I wanted to show a man risking his life over a mere sheep, I'd best go hire some rodeo puncher. He added that it was all he could bear to think of wasting his best years working the stupid beasts, much less tolerate the thought that he might lose his life to prove what a thankless occupation it had been.

He wouldn't listen to reason. I tried to tell him that he hadn't broken any bones in the first wreck and the odds were good that he could plow into a mesquite twice the size of this one as many as four or five times without sustaining a crippling injury.

After all, as I pointed out to him, all cowboys stars launch their careers by falling off running horses, or steering runaway coaches over cliffs. And who ever heard or saw one of them who was lame or had lost any teeth?

As it nearly always turns out when we have one of these misunderstandings he had the last word by stating that he would consent to reenact the tree accident if he could select, from our past association, a similar scene in which I would play the principal part.

Of course he had me there. Even though the most western event I could recall being involved in during the past year was the one in which my horse Blucher and I had such a falling out over his stepping on my big toe. I couldn't agree to something that might result in leaving a wife with eight kids to feed. So I had no choice but to drop the subject.

The other hands (all Mexicans) are somewhat more sympathetic to the project. Yet they can't, to save their lives, get it in their minds that a horse bucking or falling must occur when the sun is in the right position if we are going to shoot the action.

So there the matter rests. The shooting is three months behind schedule. From the way it looks now, I may have to return to my original plan which called for an all-wetback cast. And — who knows? — there may be an influx of these illegal immigrants who have enough foresight and ambition to realize that a little tree crashing or bronc tuning is a mighty small sacrifice to become a great movie star.